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Letter dated 10 January 2001 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On the instructions of my Government, I have the honour to transmit, annexed hereto, the text of an address made at Kinshasa on Wednesday, 10 January 2001 by His Excellency Mr. Léonard She Okitundu, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, to the diplomatic corps accredited in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The content of this address, which concerns the historic meeting of 9 January 2001 at Libreville (Gabonese Republic) between the protagonists of the Burundian crisis, is an additional demonstration of the unshakeable desire of His Excellency President Laurent Désiré Kabila to give unstinting support to the peace process in the Republic of Burundi as initiated at Arusha, as well as my Government's constant concern to ensure peace, stability and security in the Great Lakes subregion.

My Government believes that the solution of the crisis in Burundi is an essential and inseparable element of the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, bearing in mind the disastrous consequences of Burundi's ethnic conflicts in the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

My Government therefore welcomes the commitment by His Excellency President Pierre Buyoya of Burundi to withdraw his troops from Congolese territory and calls upon the Security Council to support the Burundian head of State in this commendable effort.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter, and its annex, circulated as a Security Council document.

(*Signed*) Atoki **Ileka**
Minister Counsellor
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex to the letter dated 10 January 2001 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Address by His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation to the diplomatic corps accredited in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

10 January 2001

Your Excellency, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps,
Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen Ambassadors,
Distinguished guests,

First of all, it is my agreeable duty to express sincere appreciation to you for having responded in such large number to my invitation today.

It is a great honour for me to offer you my very best wishes for this new year, and above all for this new millennium which, we all hope, will be less conflict-ridden, less cruel, and more humane than the previous millennium.

Having planned to receive you in the very near future in order to inform you about the new foreign policy of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in general, and the peace process in particular, it was on an exceptional basis, in view of the pressing nature of the situation, that I took the liberty, on behalf of the Government of National Salvation, to invite you here today in order to brief you on the historic meeting which was held at Libreville on 9 January 2001 between the protagonists of the Burundian crisis.

On the strength of the geostrategic importance of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Central Africa, and considering that a policy of good-neighbourliness is one of the basic pillars of its foreign policy, along with a deep commitment to peace, His Excellency Mzee Laurent-Désiré Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, has seen fit to offer his good offices in the context of the resolution of the Burundian crisis.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo, anxious to ensure peace, stability and security in the Great Lakes subregion, has decided to support the efforts of the international community in the Arusha peace process, in view of the lack of active involvement of the Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie (FDD).

The meeting at Libreville between the President of the Republic of Burundi, Mr. Pierre Buyoya, and colonel Jean-Bosco Ndayikengurukiye, coordinator-general of the Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie (CNDD)/FDD, under the auspices of the Gabonese head of State, His Excellency Mr. El Hadj Omar Bongo, and his counterpart in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, His Excellency Mzee Laurent-Désiré Kabila, took place at a time of resurgence in our countries of the military activities of aggressor States, among which is Burundi.

Your Excellency, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps,
Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen Ambassadors,
Distinguished guests,

The Government of National Salvation, at the urging of the President of the Republic, has never made any secret of its intentions to contribute to the maximum extent to the restoration of peace, both in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the border countries, including those which are occupying a significant part of our territory.

The Arusha Agreement on "Peace and Reconciliation in Burundi", signed with great pomp on 28 August 2000 by the belligerents in the Burundian crisis, and facilitated by the South African President Mr. Nelson Mandela, has not fully met the expectations of the Burundian people.

What seemed to be the beginning of a genuine process that would lead to lasting peace rapidly turned into a jumble of intentions and measures, making the Agreement almost impossible to implement.

It was for that reason that the Burundi donors, meeting at Paris, determined that the full release of aid to the peace process, estimated at about $400 million, would be conditional upon the effective implementation of the above-mentioned Agreement.

It was in this context that the need arose for the personal involvement of the Congolese head of State in the Arusha peace process, as well as direct contacts between the Burundian President and the leader of FDD.

On that occasion, Minister Didier Mumengi delivered a message from the head of State concerning the need for the restoration of peace in Burundi in view of the repercussions of that country's conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

However, we deplored the absence of the key protagonists of the Burundian conflict, particularly the Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie (FDD) which, in the absence of sufficient guarantees and certain prior conditions, had not been able to sit at the negotiating table.

It should be noted, in this respect, that the current crisis in Burundi goes back to the unfortunate events of 1993 and 1994.

Since then, Burundi has been caught in a terrible spiral of violence which the Arusha Agreement was unable to stop, and this situation has had an impact on the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

It was at the request of President Pierre Buyoya that the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mzee Laurent-Désiré Kabila, exerted all his influence for the Libreville meeting to take place. It should be stressed, in this respect, that the Abuja meeting of 23 December 2000 between the two heads of State was a decisive factor.

Following this summit meeting, two principles were identified, namely:

- A meeting between the FDD leader, Mr. Jean-Bosco Ndayikengurukiye, and the Burundian President;
- The search for ways and means to achieve a peaceful settlement of the war of aggression of which the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a victim, taking into account the clear involvement of Burundi.

Your Excellency, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps,
Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen Ambassadors,
Distinguished guests,

The historic meeting at Libreville, initiated by the head of State Mzee Laurent-Désiré Kabila, was an important and decisive stage in reactivating the Arusha peace process, which will continue to be facilitated by His Excellency Mr. Nelson Mandela.

As may be noted, this is a crucial contribution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which for a long time was unjustly considered as a major obstacle to the achievement of peace in Burundi.

Since it was being alleged that the borders were insecure because the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo was being used as a rear base for hostile forces, including forces opposed to the authority of Bujumbura, the Government of National Salvation could not take a passive view of Burundi's security concerns.

Thus, the head of State spared no effort to persuade the leader of FDD, despite his extreme reluctance to sit at the same table as President Buyoya.

Indeed, the impasse in the Arusha peace process was overcome through the personal involvement of the Congolese head of State, who was able to bring together the Burundian protagonists, with the invaluable assistance of the Gabonese President, His Excellency Mr. El Hadj Omar Bongo.

The latter demonstrated, once again, his experience and wisdom in the area of the peaceful settlement of disputes.

The outcome of the Libreville meeting was as follows:

1. A determination among the Burundians to find a peaceful solution to their crisis;

2. Agreement on the points of discussion and on the need for a meeting in the near future in order to establish a timetable.

This diplomatic advance will definitely have a positive impact on the solution of the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, since the Burundian President has undertaken to withdraw his troops from Congolese territory.

The resolution of the crisis in Burundi is an essential and inseparable element of the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in view of the disastrous consequences of Burundi's ethnic conflicts on our territory.

The Congolese and Burundian ministers of defence are now in Nairobi to study the practical modalities for the withdrawal of the Burundian troops and the armed elements of FDD which are believed to be based in Congolese territory.

Your Excellency, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps,
Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen Ambassadors,
Distinguished guests,

May I remind the international community which you all represent here that, setting aside legalistic formalities and legal niceties, the belligerents can always opt for dialogue and direct contact, when other structures make this possible, in order to promote a stalled peace process.

The Government of National Salvation appeals to the international community to support this peace process in order to prevent extremists of all kinds from sabotaging this positive initiative, and in particular to obtain security guarantees for the FDD elements which have just demonstrated their good faith in direct talks with the Bujumbura regime, negatively regarded by others.

The Burundian authorities should therefore proceed to dismantle all the concentration camps and release all the political prisoners.

I thank you.